

BOOK REVIEW

RICHARD CONDIT, ROLANDO PÉREZ, AND NEFERTARIS DAGUERRE. 2011. **Trees of Panama and Costa Rica**. (ISBN-13: 978-0-691-14707-9, hbk.; 978-0-691-14710-9, pbk.). Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, U.S.A. (**Orders:** press.princeton.edu/titles/9289.html). \$85.00 (hbk.), \$45.00 (pbk.), 552 pp., 438 color figures, 5 line illustrations, 482 maps, 6" × 9".

This book is a comprehensive and authoritative field guide to the trees of Panama and Costa Rica. It is offered as a learning tool for budding botanists, ecologists, and nature tourists, yet its clarity and user-friendliness make it accessible to all.

Introductory chapters offer readers an overview of the forests in Panama and Costa Rica highlighting its great species richness. The authors consolidate the forest communities into five major categories—dry, moist, wet, lower montane, and upper montane—and discuss the impact of human development on Central American forests, noting how, but for a few remnant areas, dry tropical forests have been almost entirely wiped out, making way for cities, towns, and pasture. Additionally, the authors provide a basic overview of tree identification before diving into detailed family and species descriptions.

The heart of the field guide examines tree species by family. These pages cover 493 tree species and include 438 color plates and photos detailing leaves, flowers, fruit, bark, and when possible, magnification of such. Clear and concise descriptions are broken down by family and then by genus and species. The authors offer tips to facilitate recognition with color distribution maps, local tree names in Spanish and English, and refer the reader to other similar or related species. The appendices round out the guide offering a tabular summary of leaf traits of known tree families as well as information on families not covered.

The authors spent 15 years compiling lists of Panamanian trees. Costa Rica however, shares 72% of its tree species with Panama, affording the authors the opportunity to develop similar lists for Costa Rica based on occurrence records from the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, and the New York Botanical Gardens. This guide is truly the product of years of research and hard work by many.

This book fills an important niche among field guides, as few address trees specific to Central America. When they do, they are often described together with trees of the Americas, diluted among discussions of trees from North and South America, or they are thrown in with general nature and rainforest books. While a few gaps remain, this book is the most comprehensive and accessible field guide available for this region.

This is the field guide I wish I'd had as a forester living and working in Costa Rica in the mid-1990s. Its only drawback is its large size. This book would have been a welcome addition to the field guide collection in my backpack.—Gwen Michele Thomas, Texas Master Naturalist, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 1700 University Drive, Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3400, U.S.A.